THE MIZAN NEWSLETTER

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The Mizan Newsletter aims at giving an objective and balanced account of current Soviet writings on the Middle East

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Soviet apprehensions of a rapprochement between the Arab countries and the West possibly underlie a recent NEW TIMES article which is reviewed in the first article in this issue, The Arabs and the West: A Soviet Warning. The Soviet article denounces a notion current in Arab countries to the effect that, with imperialism defeated, the communist countries are now the enemy.

Kirkuk: The Soviet Version reviews a Soviet account of the Kirkuk disorders of July, according to which communists and their sympathizers were the victims of an unprovoked attack and only reacted in self-defence. This account is contrasted both with Qasim's own attitude to the Kirkuk events, and with the Iraqi Communist Party's self-criticism which followed them.

Israel and the Arabs, the last of three articles on Soviet views on Israel, shows how far Soviet writers have gone in expressing support for the Arabs against Israel; but it also shows how from time to time, to avoid the imputation of taking sides, they insist that the conflict is basically an artificial one.

A leading topic in Soviet Angle on the News is the Soviet complaint that, at a time when Khrushchev's proposals have paved the way for international disarmament, Turkey is participating in measures directed against the security of the Soviet Union.

Whatever sentiments the partisans of neutralism may themselves entertain towards the Western nations on the one hand and the Soviet bloc on the other, the Soviet view is that their natural ally is the Soviet Union and their natural enemy the "Western imperialists". The prevalence of the slogan "Neither East nor West" in Arab nationalist circles, therefore, has evoked some indignant Soviet comment. However, the latest Soviet complaint is that a new doctrine has made its appearance, according to which imperialism has been defeated, and communism and the communist countries are now the enemy of the Arabs.

The "two-stage theory" Under the heading "evil theory", in NEW TIMES No.42 of 1959, E. Maximov gives the following account of the doctrine in question:

> "The so-called 'two-stage theory' has latterly gained currency in certain Arab countries. Its advocates believe that the first stage of the Arab movement for national liberation - the fight against imperialism and for national independence - has been passed. Consolidation of the United Arab Republic's independence is held up as proof. Now, it is claimed, the Arabs have entered the second stage - imperialism has been licked, but there is a new enemy, the communists. Some 'two-stage' theoreticians even maintain that the socialist countries are Enemy No. 1. And from this the conclusion is drawn that a 'regrouping of forces' is inevitable: in the first stage the Arab nations, notably the UAR, relied on the support of the socialist countries; in the second stage they must seek Western support against the 'communist menace'."

It may be noticed that the UAR is particularly mentioned in the above context. In fact, since Nasir launched his attack on the communists in December 1958 the Soviet press has repeatedly accused Cairo publicists of taking a pro-Western and anti-Soviet line. However, Maximov goes on to apply his observations to the whole of the Arab world.

Western intentions unchanged This "two-stage theory", says Maximov, is an attempt to divert the Arabs' attention from the struggle against imperialism, "which today as in the past represents a very real danger to the independence and future of the Arab countries". Firstly, the writer says, "millions of Arabs are still under colonialist rule" in Algeria, in Jordan and in Southern Arabia. Secondly, those Arab countries which are independent are surrounded by Western military bases - in Libya, Bizerta, Cyprus, Aden, Kenya - which "is certainly not proof of good intentions". Israel, says Maximov, continues to play its role in Western plans against the independent Arab nations; Israeli public figures such as Gen. Moshe Dayan have been urging a repetition of the Suez campaign to extend Israel's

frontier to the canal; and an Israeli oil pipeline from Elath to Haifa now under construction will give the West a new means of pressure against the Arab countries and, in the event of a conflict, will prevent the Arabs from cutting Western oil supplies as in 1956.

Further, says Maximov, the politically independent Arab countries are now striving for economic independence, and this the "Western imperialists" are doing all they can to prevent, "for that would rule out monopoly control of Arab natural resources". The USSR, on the other hand, is giving vital economic and technical assistance to the Arab countries; and for this reason the Western aim is to stir up trouble between the Arab countries and the socialist countries, so that "this has become the decisive front in the national struggle of the Arab peoples". Of US offers of aid to the UAR, Maximov says: "American assistance is not meant to facilitate economic development, but to bring Egypt and Syria under American tutelage." The Western idea, he says, is that economic aid will be a substitute for pacts - and this shows its true nature.

Summing up his argument, Maximov insists (and italics are used) that "for all Arab countries without exception the struggle against imperialism is the chief task". The fact that such a warning should be thought necessary, and that it should be voiced in such strident tones, is evidence of an acute Soviet awareness of new trends in Arab nationalist thinking, and a sensitivity towards Western rapprochements and economic contacts with the Arab countries.

KIRKUK: THE SOVIET VERSION

The continuance of Soviet support for the Iraqi Communist Party is evident from recent articles in Soviet periodicals. It is clear that the party's amended policy, following its public confession of errors in July this year, has received Soviet endorsement. The Soviet Communist Party journal KOMMUNIST (No. 12 of 1959) published in full the Iraqi Communist Party's account of shortcomings in its policy (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 9, p. 11); and, more recently, SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK (No. 9 of 1959) has published an article in praise of the party's policy, under the heading "In the struggle for national unity".

The Iraqi Communist Party's confession of errors has been represented by some as in some measure prompted by the Kirkuk disorders of 14th July and by the excesses perpetrated by the communists during those disorders. It might therefore have been expected that Soviet writers would find the subject of the Kirkuk disorders an embarrassing one. However, this is far from the case. Under the heading "Provocation in Kirkuk", in INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS No. 9 of 1959, S. Danilov gives an account of the Kirkuk events in

which the role of "the democratic patriotic forces" and "the progressives" - that is, the communists - is presented in the most flattering light.

A "criminal provocation" Danilov's account of the actual disorders is as follows:

> "The imperialists and the internal reaction, who had recovered somewhat after the defeat of the Mosul putsch in March, decided to launch a fresh attack against the Iraqi people during the celebration of the Revolution's first anniversary. When the people in many towns came out into the streets to demonstrate their loyalty to the new system and their readiness to defend their gains from any encroachment, armed bands of reactionaries and foreign henchmen opened fire at them.
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> "The most sinister provocation was organized in Kirkuk, where oilfields of the Iraq Petroleum Company, whose capital is owned by British, American and French monopolies, are located. Many people who came from the aggressive Baghdad Pact countries, above all from Turkey, live in Kirkuk. It was precisely groups of these people - Turanists as they are called locally - who refused to take part in the town's general demonstration and organized their own column, from which the first shots were fired."

This "criminal provocation", Danilov says, was planned by the anti-subversion committee of the Baghdad Pact:

> "The United States is represented on this committee, although it has not joined the Pact officially. The more objective foreign correspondents frankly state in their reports that the threads of the provocation lead to this 'committee' ... These provocations were staged clearly with the intention of disrupting the popular festivities, of spreading confusion among the broad masses, splitting the ranks of the democratic patriotic forces, driving a wedge between the progressive circles and governmental institutions, frightening the people and introducing chaos."

Any violence by the "popular" faction, says Danilov, was only in self-defence:

> "This reactionary attack aroused the legitimate indignation of the Iraqi people. They rebuffed it with determination. The demonstrators in Kirkuk forced the armed bands of the imperialist henchmen to take refuge behind the walls of the fortress, where they were disarmed by troops of the local garrison."

"Reactionary" versions of the Kirkuk incidents Danilov is aware, however, that other versions of the Kirkuk incidents are current outside communist circles:

> "Subsequently reaction tried, and is still trying, to put the blame for the Kirkuk events on the progressive patriotic forces. Strange as it may seem, they are to a certain extent aided by some elements from the Iraqi administration who have not got rid as yet of memories of the Nuri as-Sa'id regime."

This is perhaps the nearest that any Soviet writer has yet come to admitting the existence of an anti-communist faction in the Iraqi Government It is indeed an interesting statement in the light of Qasim's own attitude to the Kirkuk events. Qasim has consistently blamed the Kirkuk outrages on "anarchists", which is commonly taken as meaning communists. Danilov, however, makes out that Qasim has denounced "reaction" as responsible both for the initial disturbances and for subsequent atrocities:

> "Reaction was especially brutal in Kirkuk. Prime Minister Qasim stated that peaceful demonstrators in Kirkuk had been attacked and shot down. 'Some were even buried alive' the Premier indignantly declared."

Intransigence or compromise? All this is in sharp contrast with the spirit of compromise and national solidarity which, according to the SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK article mentioned above, now informs the policy of the Iraqi Communist Party. According to this, the party has resolutely determined "to cast aside secondary differences of opinion and to renew cooperation with other different national forces", recognizing the necessity of "prolonged coexistence between parties and national forces of different political trends, including sincere nationalists".

The difference between these two articles, the one with its emphasis on compromise in the interests of national unity, and the other with its emphasis on militant resistance to reaction, seems to indicate that Soviet views on this subject are not yet crystallized, just as there are evidently different attitudes within the party itself.

SOVIET VIEWS ON ISRAEL (3): ISRAEL AND THE ARABS

An examination of Soviet writings on Israel reveals both the extent and the limitations of Soviet sympathy and support for the Arabs in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Solidarity with the Arab case is indeed expressed both in general and on specific issues; but there is nothing that can be

construed as an avowal of permanent or unqualified support. This is basically because, in theory at least, the Arab-Israeli conflict is regarded in Moscow as something which has little existence outside the context of Western policy.

An artificial conflict Describing Palestine under the British mandate, in THE STATE OF ISRAEL, ITS SITUATION AND POLICY (1958), K. Ivanov and Z. Sheynis say that, until the "British colonizers" came to Palestine, Arabs and Jews lived together in peace and amity; it was British policy - encouragement of Jewish immigration and the sale of Arab land to Jews - that created discord. Contemporary Soviet writings, during the 1920s and 1930s, expressed similar views; they accused Britain of playing off Jews against Arabs, following the principle of "divide and rule"; and, more specifically, they accused Britain of using Zionism as a weapon against the Arab national movement. Thus the basic Soviet attitude to the Palestine problem had crystallized before the Second World War: the Arab-Jewish dispute was seen as an artificially created one; sympathy was expressed for the Arabs, in so far as they were wronged; and, in particular, sympathy was expressed for the aspirations of the Arab masses, seen as victims of the Zionist bourgeoisie (and also of their own feudal aristocracy).

In a public lecture on the Palestine problem delivered in Moscow in August 1946 the noted Soviet Arabist V.B. Lutskiy categorically declared that "Palestine is an Arab country". He laid emphasis on Russia's traditional interest in Palestine:

> "Russia played an important role in the cultural development of the Palestine Arabs. The Russian Palestine Society founded 34 Russian schools in Palestine for the local population. They were the most advanced schools in the country. Hundreds of the Arab intellectuals of Palestine received their education in Russian schools, and many of them later continued their education in secondary and higher educational establishments in Russia. The Arab intelligentsia of Palestine studied the Russian language, read Russian literature and scientific works with enthusiasm, and came under the influence of their progressive ideas."

Lutskiy's lecture represented the high-water-mark of Soviet support for the Arab cause in Palestine; the statement that "Palestine is an Arab country" was not to be made again. Yet, even with this, Lutskiy affirmed that Arabs and Jews in Palestine could live together in peace and friendship, under a "democratic government", since "the fundamental interests of the Jewish population of Palestine do not contradict the fundamental interests of the Arab masses".

In the light of this long-standing Soviet partiality for the Arab cause, the Soviet display of sympathy for Israel at the time of its establishment (MIZAN NEWSLETTER No. 9, p. 2) appears as a brief and largely unexplained interlude.

The Palestine war and its aftermath The restraints operating on Soviet support for the Arabs are at once apparent in the Soviet attitude to the Palestine war of 1948-9. One might have expected that Soviet sympathy with the Arabs would have led Soviet writers to depict the war as a just struggle by the Arabs in defence of their rights. In fact, however, Soviet writers have never lost sight of the fact that hostilities were begun by the Arab States; and they accordingly present the war as a conflict engineered and manipulated by Britain and the USA. Ivanov and Sheynis, in their book on Israel, say:

> "As the leaders of the Communist Party of Israel have correctly shown, the Palestine war was in essence not a war between Jews and Arabs but a war provoked by foreign imperialists striving to retain their positions in this part of the world. Even before the proclamation of the State of Israel the British forces in Palestine were actively assisting the kindling of conflicts between the Arab and Jewish population."

Nevertheless, Ivanov and Sheynis say that the Arabs "fought courageously" in the Palestine war, and that their leaders were to blame for their lack of success; in fact, the Soviet authors almost imply that in their opinion the Arabs were fighting for a valid cause, and not merely at the behest of others. Indeed, in 1957 at the height of Soviet support for Arab nationalism Lustkiy referred to the Palestine war (in "The problem of Arab unity", SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA No. 1 of 1957) as "the struggle which the Arab peoples waged for the liberation of Palestine from Zionist oppression".

The Soviet attitude is perhaps most pro-Arab on the subject of the Arab refugees. Ivanov and Sheynis say that the Israeli armed forces made use of the military operations to evict the Arabs from their lands; that they destroyed the Arabs' dwellings, and that on the coastal plain between Tel Aviv and Haifa "all Arab villages were destroyed except one village... which was left for propaganda purposes"; and that after the war was over Arabs continued to be driven out of the country, until 1951 and later. (Much continues to be written in Soviet publications on the alleged ill-treatment of Israel's Arab minority; and the Israeli Communist Party's championship of the rights of Israeli Arabs receives frequent notice.)

Soviet writers are also vehement in their denunciations of Israel's territorial gains as a result of the Palestine war. Ivanov, in an article in INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS No. 12 of 1957, said on this subject:

> "Israel took advantage of the weakness of the young national Arab states to seize about 6,000 sq. m. of their land in addition to the territory given her by the decision of the UN... She is stubbornly holding on to land she seized in contravention of the UN General Assembly resolution concerning her borders and the Arab refugee problem. By seizing their land, Israel set herself against the Arabs. The only people to profit by this are the colonialists who are making the most of the Arab-Israeli

contradictions to preserve their foothold in the Middle East. Israel, as a state, has gained nothing from it politically."

Soviet non-interference The view that Israel has "set herself against the Arabs", with its suggestion of irrevocable antagonism, might seem to contradict the Soviet contention that, if left to themselves by the "Western imperialists", Israel and the Arabs would compose their differences. Yet, particularly in connection with the Sinai campaign and subsequent Israeli-Arab tensions, Soviet writers depict Israel as set on a course of aggression against the Arab states from which there is no turning back. Ivanov and Sheynis suggest, indeed, that the result of the Sinai campaign was not only to confirm the Arabs' hostility to Israel but also to place the USSR finally on the side of the Arabs:

> "An inescapable consequence of Israel's aggression against Egypt was also the worsening of Israel's relations with all the socialist countries. It could not have been otherwise. The support of all kinds given by the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries to the national liberation movement of the peoples of the East is dictated by the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and by the community of interests of the struggle of the working class of the West and the oppressed peoples of the East against imperialism. The fact that Israel is a small state in no way justifies its policy."

As if to clinch this notion of Israel as a permanent enemy, Ivanov and Sheynis say that, in the basic division of nations into oppressors and oppressed, Israel is to be classed with the USA, Britain and France in the category of oppressor nations. They also have an argument to answer Israel's claim to be waging a national struggle of her own. In 1848, they say, Marx and Engels regarded the Czechs and Southern Slavs, despite their own national movements, as "reactionary peoples", since they had allied themselves with the enemy, Tsarism, against such truly "revolutionary peoples" as the Germans, Poles and Magyars. The lesson which the writers draw from this is that the interests of the liberation of large nations come before the interests of the liberation movement of small nations. In other words, the Arabs are more numerous than the Israelis and are therefore to be supported.

Nevertheless, Soviet writers constantly return to the theme that Israel and the Arabs, if left to themselves by the big Powers, could settle their differences, which are merely "a product of imperialism". A statement by Khrushchev himself is quoted to this effect (made in an interview reported in PRAVDA of 16th February 1958). There must be a reason for these reminders, with their suggestion of Soviet impartiality in the dispute. Perhaps it is that Soviet spokesmen and writers wish from time to time to correct any impression of direct Soviet interference or involvement in a dispute to which the Soviet Union is not properly a party.

Below are reviewed reports on Middle East events appearing in Soviet newspapers and publications during the period 13th October - 7th November.

Khrushchev's disarmament proposals Praise for Khrushchev's disarmament proposals from Middle East countries, notably Iraq and the UAR, was duly noted in Soviet newspapers. The attitude of Middle East countries allied with the West, notably Turkey, was the subject of special comment (see below, "US-Turkish relations"); it was claimed that Turkey's leaders were violently hostile to a relaxation of East-West tension, and that in this they were finding their Western allies out of sympathy with them. The Soviet Union's attitude towards such differences between allies is stated in general terms in the leading article of INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS of October as follows:

> "The misgivings of some political leaders in capitalist countries that a US-Soviet rapprochement will somehow worsen the political position of their states is totally unfounded. Will not the entire world, all peoples benefit from the clearing away of threatening clouds from the international atmosphere? The Soviet Union has no intention of setting the United States at odds with its allies and partners, of injuring them in any way. The Soviet people hope that improved US-Soviet relations will, in turn, help to normalize the relations of the USSR with all countries that are allied to the USA. The only ones who have reason to be apprehensive about the dispelling of hostility between the USSR and the USA are those who derive immediate gain out of the cold war, those who are so committed to this policy that its failure would mean their own political bankruptcy."

Presumably the last sentence is intended to apply, for instance, to the leaders of Turkey, and to excuse Soviet attempts to make capital out of the improved international climate at their expense.

Khrushchev's report to the Supreme Soviet Khrushchev's speech of 31st October on the international situation and Soviet foreign policy contained a passage on the Middle East situation which was in fact entirely a denunciation of the Central Treaty Organization. In particular, Khrushchev deplored the results of Turkey's participation in CENTO, and plans to set up US rocket bases in Turkey:

> "Turkish territory has been turned into a regular military place d'armes where, in addition, foreign rockets with nuclear warheads will now be stationed. It is scarcely necessary to say that in the first instance this undermines the security of Turkey herself. We have spoken more than once of the danger of this

direction in Turkey's foreign policy and have submitted concrete proposals in the interests of establishing good-neighbourly relations between our states. We sincerely want our relations to be built in the spirit of friendliness and cooperation which characterized the fairly recent past when so outstanding a figure as Kemal Ataturk determined Turkey's policy."

The USSR's relations with Persia also, said Khrushchev, left much to be desired:

"The Soviet Government has in recent years carried out a number of important measures directed towards the establishment of good and friendly relations with Persia. But the leaders of Persia, contrary to the national interests of their country, have preferred to bind themselves with military commitments both within the CENTO military bloc and outside it, commitments directed against the Soviet Union."

US-Turkish relations The Soviet press gave wide publicity to a NEW YORK TIMES article of 11th October, reporting that NATO atomic missile bases were to be set up in Turkey, and illustrated by a map showing what places in the USSR could be reached by these missiles. IZVESTIYA (13th October) said that the USA had a special reason for "boosting" Turkey in this way at this moment; Turkey was a candidate for the vacant seat on the UN Security Council, and the State Department thought that this would lend weight to her candidature; but UN members, and particularly the Afro-Asian states, had voted against Turkey and against the US rocket bases.

IZVESTIYA of 18th October said that, while the Turkish press was publicizing the projected missile bases, "making no secret of the fact that they are destined for use against the Soviet Union", the Turkish Premier and Foreign Minister were visiting the USA. They had "only one aim, to cast aspersions on the peaceful foreign policy of the USSR"; their constant theme was "Do not trust the Communists!"; and Menderes had even expressed the opinion that Khrushchev's visit to the USA could not have "any notable influence on the problems facing the free world". Americans were increasingly realizing, said IZVESTIYA, that their Turkish friends were "people who stick to the Right-wing policy of 'positions of strength' and who cannot find their place in the newly arisen international political situation".

US-Lebanese relations PRAVDA of 24th October said that the frequent calls of US warships at Beirut were "causing great alarm among the Lebanese public"; the Beirut newspaper AS-SAHAFA had said that these constant visits of aircraft-carriers, cruisers and destroyers of the Sixth Fleet "mean that the port of Beirut is in fact occupied by the US fleet"; and AN-NIDA had declared that these visits of US warships were violating Lebanon's neutrality.

UAR trial of communists PRAVDA of 24th October quoted the Italian Communist Party organ UNITA for a report that since 15th August a military court in Alexandria had been trying 48 communists, "people who have spent all their energies in the cause of Egypt's progress and liberation from colonialism...people who constitute only a small part of the 15,000 democrats and communists arrested in January and March of this year and thrown into torture-chambers". The "trial of the 48", said the newspaper, was proceeding in the strictest secrecy, just as the "trial of the 64" which preceded it. Those accused included journalists, teachers, trade union leaders, writers, artists, students and workers.

Soviet-UAR relations PRAVDA reported that on 1st November Salah Salim, the managing director of At-Tahrir publishing house (which publishes the newspaper AL-JUMHURIYAH) arrived in Moscow on a visit, accompanied by two editors of AL-JUMHURIYAH.

TRUD of 14th October reported that a delegation of the UAR general organization of marine transport, led by its director Muhammad Tawfiq Ahmad, was visiting Moscow for discussions on the implementation of the Soviet-UAR agreement on navigation concluded in September 1958.

Soviet-Iraqi relations Soviet newspapers reported the activity of a team of Soviet medical workers which had been in Iraq for three months engaged in a campaign for vaccination of the entire population against smallpox.

IZVESTIYA of 1st November reported the arrival in Moscow of a delegation of the port administration of Basrah, led by the general director of the port Muzhir ash-Shawi, who were to study Soviet methods.

The XXVth International Congress of Orientalists - Moscow 1960
An announcement by the organizational committee of the XXVth International Congress of Orientalists, published in SOVREMENNYY VOSTOK No. 9 of 1959, stated that the committee has decided to hold the conference not in Leningrad, as was planned earlier, but in Moscow.

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